1995 IEEE-USA Employment Assistance Committee

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EAC Survey Studies Members' Unemployment

In June 1995, the IEEE-USA Employment Assistance Committee gathered valuable information about unemployed members through a survey sent to the more than 3000 US members who had renewed their membership at the half-priced rate. The 22 question survey was part of a package of information on IEEE employment assistance services.

Within two months 28%, nearly 900 questionnaires had been completed and returned. A statistical analysis of the responses and a regression analysis of the duration of unemployment produced informative results will be used by the Committee to direct future programs.

Some results

At the time of the survey, six months after their membership renewal, 46% of the respondents reported being employed in some capacity — 20% were employed full-time as engineers, 15% were employed full-time as other than an engineer and 11% are either self-employed or employed part-time. Of the remaining 54%, 5% were retired and 48% still unemployed.

The typical respondent to the employment survey is 51 years of age, has 24 years of experience, holds a graduate degree (57%), and was unemployed an average of 84 weeks. In comparison, the typical respondent of the *Salary and Fringe Benefits Survey 1995* was 48 years old, has 21 years of experience and holds a graduate degree (53%). Those Salary Survey respondents that reported being out of work at some time averaged 31 weeks of joblessness. The employment survey respondents that reported

Straight Talk
Nets: Tools for the Professional Engineer

by Jean M. Eason

The results of the survey of unemployed IEEE US members (reported on elsewhere in this newsletter) yielded some valuable information that the EAC is integrating into their plans for next year. But, I would like to take some time to highlight couple of areas, in particular, that caught my attention.

The 'Net

The first area is the number of members having Internet access. A constant criticism of the Job Listing System has have access to the Internet — they lose it when they leave their employers. I was pleasantly surprised to see that nearly 40% have Internet access without being employed. Since those numbers will only increase in the years to come, the Committee can continue to focus on enhancing our Internet services and (perhaps) put behind us the question of members access to these services.

Another interesting point relating the Internet to employment was the regres-

Finding a Job on the Internet

by Irving Weiner, Employment Assistance Coordinator, Region 1

For many of today's professionals the Internet is becoming great fishing hole for a new job. The swiftly growing popularity and accessibility of the 'Net, particularly the World Wide Web, have made it invaluable to our less fortunate members who are presently searching for a new position, be it entry level or senior slot levels. At the 1995 PACE Conference, the EAC workshop highlighted electronic job search techniques, specifically the IEEE-USA Job Listing Service.

To illustrate some of the many on-line opportunities for job seekers, EAC brought up on line the National Job Listing Service. These listings on the Internet are by state covering the six USA regions in separate auto-response files. A seventh file covers nation wide and international listings. Any of these auto-response files can be accessed by members—merely by sending a message to the email address of the desired file—the text message can simply be "hello" or nothing at all. The auto-response file requested is turned around to your "email box." There is no fax machine or phone answering machine or "snail mail" to worry about. Once the selected file is in your email box, you can read it or download it to a word processing program and perform "key word" searches

on the information. Copied to floppies it can be distributed to other members or printed out and posted at your local Job-Bank meetings.

The JLS is but one electronic job search tool, there are many other similar sources out there on the 'Net. Listed below are a group of Web sites that contain references to employment.
- http://www.monster.com
- http://www.espan.com
- http://www.fedworld.gov
- http://netmart.com/ak.html
- http://helpwanted.com
- http://www.careermosaic.com
- http://gate.net/biotech-jobs
- http://www.ceweekly.wa.com
- http://www.internet-is.com/skillsearch

On the USENET newsgroups there are several groups that invite the job seeker:
- misc.jobs.contract
- misc.jobs.misc
- misc.jobs.offered
- misc.jobs.offered.entry
- misc.jobs.resumes

Electronic job search tips

Companies recruiting electronically expect quick responses to their advertisements. Do not delay in contacting a company or recruiter about an opening. In addition to responding via email, do not overlook faxing your resume through

your PC to the corporate world. There are several advantages here: you can 'broadcast' your resume to a list of companies late at night when phone rates are lowest. A typical 'faxed' resume will cost 1/2 the price of postage stamp to any point in the US. Do not use email to 'broadcast' your resume!! The heading will list each addressee right up front and may not be looked upon kindly.

If you are responding to a job posting from the JLS, highlight your IEEE membership and indicate that you are responding to the ad in the JLS. The employer or recruiter advertising on this system is doing so because he specifically wants to network with the IEEE. Your membership will be a definite advantage for you in this situation.

Privacy and security are not guaranteed on the Internet, neither can you count on recruiters not passing your resume to other recruiters. If you are concerned that your resume might appear in your company's HR department, you might want to consider using a pseudonym and a local PO box address.

For those members who have further questions, suggestions or contributions please do not hesitate to contact any of the members of the Employment Activities Committee. ✦

Book Review: *Best of Both Worlds*

by Ronald Oglevie, Chair, SBIR Working Group, Orange County Consultants' Network and Bob Gauger, Employment Assistance Coordinator, Region 6

This book by John and Barbara Sangster is a very readable "how-to" manual for writing successful Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) proposals to the government. The theme of the book is that SBIR contracts can provide hundreds of thousands of dollars for development of exciting new hi-tech products, and at the same time, can give the devel-

oper full rights for their commercial exploitation or sale to other customers. Fortunately, the emphasis of this book is on the very small (single-person) business which makes it a valuable guide for consultants or entrepreneurs.

The book covers the majority of the questions that a neophyte or proposal veteran might have. It presents enough material for anyone with a modest business sense to prepare and submit a reasonable cost proposal. It also provides background material and references.

The book is not without fault. It tends to be limited to Department of Defense (DoD) proposals. Other agencies have slightly different procedures.

Overall, however, it is a well-organized and easy to apply publication with a great deal of wisdom and advice on proposal preparation.

This book was published at $49.95, but IEEE members can be obtain it from SPHINX Technologies (617) 235-8800 for $29.95. ✦

Nets
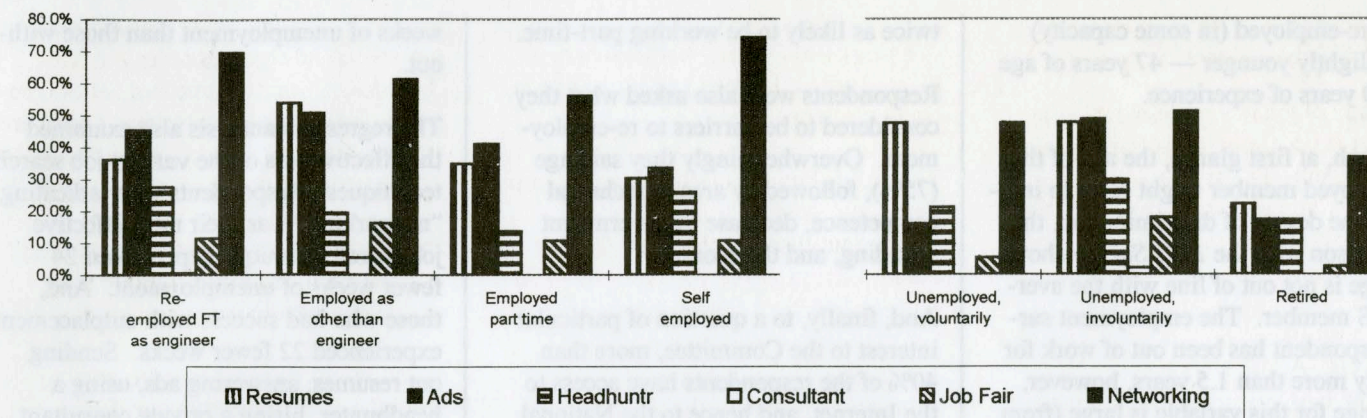
sion analysis conclusion that members with Internet access experience 19 fewer weeks of joblessness as compared to those without access. Nearly five months less unemployment!

There wasn't enough data from the survey to determine *why* Internet access reduces the weeks of joblessness. It doesn't mean that the "connected" members found a job through the Internet. But, for some reason, those with access are more employable than those without.

So, for those members who haven't started "surfing the 'Net," but have a computer and modem, EAC has some diskettes and software to give you a few free hours on some of the on-line services. Contact Bill Anderson for copies.

Networking

For me, the most compelling data from the survey of unemployed members is illustrated in the graph above. Compare the responses of the groups on the right with those on the left. One thing that jumps out at you is bar representing 'networking.' The groups on the left find networking to be (by far) the most effective job search technique. No surprise — that conclusion follows with everything we have heard from the employment experts.

Now, look at the groups on the right. These members don't think nearly as highly of networking. *What's the difference between the two sides of the graph?* The groups on the left have been re-em-

ployed — those on the right have not.

Why are the unemployed members not finding networking to be an effective job search technique? (Please, send me your opinions.) I think it may be because they don't know how to effectively network. So, let's look at a few networking tips.

Networking is an on-going process — a lifestyle. It's not something you start just because you are out of a job — calling up everyone you know and asking if they have a job for you. And, it's more than just passing out business cards. If you're smart, you've been strategically building your network over many years, nurturing and maintaining the contacts. I say 'strategic' because you want to seek out and include those people who will be of the most use when you need them. Once you find them, you have to exert some effort to maintain them in your working network — get to know them, stay in touch, exchange (give and receive) favors, information and advice.

Who are these people? They come from three basic sources: social, professional and organizational associations. Your social network is, of course, all of your friends and family, as well as clergy, neighbors, etc. Although you may think there is little possibility of a job coming from this group, these are the people with the greatest desire to help you.

The professional network is made up of colleagues, former supervisors or managers, former employees, customers and vendors. These are the people who will

know you best in your professional persona.

The organizational network is one with which you can be the most 'strategic.' This includes professional, community and civic associations. By judiciously choosing from among the myriad of groups that would be happy to accept your donation of time and energy, you can make many contacts that might significantly benefit your career. For instance, active participation in an organization such as IEEE is a great way to meet like-minded technical professionals or someone employed at a company you'd like to work for. Likewise, many of the community's 'movers and shakers' can be found on the boards of organizations like the local art museum, regional theaters, boys & girls clubs and service organizations.

And, notice I said *active participation*. Networking is a give-and-take proposition. You have to give value in order to receive value. You have to do more than join, you have to participate — in volunteer activities, meetings and mixers, high-tech forums and trade shows. The Internet has opened up a whole new opportunity for participation. Join one of the 'news groups' and exchange information. (One of our EAC members found a job by doing just that!)

Networking can be a powerful tool, not only for job searching but for career growth. Look again at the information in the graph. All those colleagues of yours can't be wrong! ✦

being re-employed (in some capacity) were slightly younger — 47 years of age and 20 years of experience.

Although, at first glance, the age of the unemployed member might seem to indicate some degree of discrimination, the comparison with the *1995 Survey* shows that age is not out of line with the average US member. The employment survey respondent has been out of work for slightly more than 1.5 years, however, the range for this variable is large (from 1 to 1100 weeks) and the median is closer to 1 year (57 weeks). Ninety-five percent of the respondents were out of work 200 weeks or less. Most reported finding it "very difficult" to get a job.

Most of the respondents (60%) are aware of some portion of IEEE's employment assistance services, but more than 500 requested a packet of more detailed information. And, it is gratifying to know that when asked what IEEE could be doing to help members, 14% said that we were doing a good job. This was the second most frequent response after "facilitate networking," 19%.

An analysis of industry of previous employment shows that, overall, more respondents worked in the defense and aerospace industries. Following these are computers and electrical/electronics services. And, most of those that remain unemployed were previously in aerospace and defense. Respondents employed in education were more than

twice as likely to be working part-time.

Respondents were also asked what they considered to be barriers to re-employment. Overwhelmingly they said age (75%), followed by area of technical competence, decrease in government spending, and the economy.

And, finally, to a question of particular interest to the Committee, more than 40% of the respondents have access to the Internet, and hence to the National Job Listing Service. Even when adjusting for current employment status, 39% of the currently involuntarily unemployed have Internet access.

What affects length of unemployment?

A multiple regression analysis of the data on duration of unemployment partially explains why some respondents have been out of work longer than others. This analysis examines what effect a variable such as age has on weeks of joblessness when all other variables are held constant. Age, in particular, has a significant and independent affect on joblessness: for each additional year of age, joblessness increases by two weeks. Having advanced degrees also increases joblessness. For each increase in degree (AA to BA to MA/MBA to MSEE to PhD) duration of unemployment increases six weeks.

On the other hand, respondents with access to the Internet experience 19 fewer

weeks of unemployment than those without.

The regression analysis also examined the effectiveness of the various job search techniques. Respondents who indicating "networking" was their most effective job search technique experienced 24 fewer weeks of unemployment. And, those who had success with outplacement experienced 22 fewer weeks. Sending out resumes, answering ads, using a headhunter, hiring a private consultant, going to job fairs and using Internet job listings have no independent effect on duration of unemployment. ✦

A final note . . .

I would like to thank all of you for putting up with me and my opinions for the past couple of years. I know the masthead on the first page looks the same as it did in 1995 — but, you're fixin' to see some changes. As much as I have enjoyed working with the Employment Assistance Committee and Bill and Marnie in the Washington Office, I will be moving on. I am leaving the EAC in the capable hands of Dick Riddle, our Region 3 representative. You all know the great things Region 3 has been accomplishing in the area of employment assistance. I am sure Dick will apply his valuable knowledge and vast experience to the benefit of all US members as chairman of EAC. Good luck, Dick and all the great guys on EAC.

—*Jean M. Eason*